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Terrorist Group Dupes Lawmakers

About 200 members of Congress have been suckered into writing letters of endorsement for a terrorist group whose cadres participated in the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy and American hostages in Iran. In fact, the group advocated putting the hostages on trial as spies, and staged a demonstration protesting their release.

This militant Marxist organization has sent fast-talking Iranian exiles, soaped, pressed and wearing tailored suits and neatly knotted ties, to visit Capitol Hill. They have persuaded gullible lawmakers that they are "freedom fighters" against Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

It's technically true that these Marxist revolutionaries, once pro-Khomeini, turned against him after he began a remorseless crackdown on communist elements in Iran.

They now call themselves the "People Mojahedin Organization of Iran"—a name that apparently sounds enough like the anti-Soviet Mujahideen guerrillas in Afghanistan to confuse the unwary.

We unmasked the Mojahedin terrorists last August and told how they had hoodwinked several members of Congress into writing letters of support.

Some of the gulled lawmakers quickly repudiated the Mojahedin, but the Iranian Marxists merely redoubled their lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill. Now the State Department has privately warned members of Congress that they are being courted by militants who are devout Marxists, stridently anti-American and violent.

The department's warning is contained in a one-page summary of an intelligence report on the Iranian exile group. Our associate Lucette Lagnado has obtained the report, which says the group was formed to combat "U.S. imperialism" and "criminal Zionism." These are regarded by the Mojahedin as "the principal forces which have corrupted Iran and oppressed the world."

According to the document, members of the group "have advocated the use of violence since their inception" and have participated in "bombings, assassinations of Iranians, attacks on Israeli offices in Tehran and bank robberies."

The Mojahedin apparently were among the student militants who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979.

"The Mojahedin took a measure of credit for the prolonged holding of American diplomats as hostages," notes the State Department report, "advocated putting them on trial as spies and staged a large demonstration in Tehran protesting their release [in January 1981]."